

BOOKS + AUTHORS + STORIES

SHARING STORIES

SS
Sharing Stories

June 2020

01

Edition

AUTHOR INTERVIEWS

Nipun Varma
Sourish Roy

FEATURED BOOKS

Begums of Peshawar
En route Kasol
Mayakaatha



PLUS

Writing Contests
Book Reviews
Short Stories
Poetry

"You Beneath Your Skin"
In conversation with Damyanti Biswas

Readers meet Writers.

Creating a platform to inspire the next
generation of content creators.

partners

#letsmakestoriesdino



PIYA GAJBE

CHIEF EDITOR |
SHARING STORIES

PROFILE

Piya Gajbe is an advocate and a writer by choice. Having written a number of short stories, blogs and articles for various online platforms and offline magazines, she has recently published her debut novel, 'When Fate Kicks'. Poetry is soul therapy for her and she has a published collection of poems, "Dews N Petals" to her credit. An author, who believes firmly that there are stories all around us, she mostly finds her characters in the surroundings of mundane life. She loves to bring out the extraordinary tales of ordinary people around her through her writings.

A doting mother to a son and an avid reader, apart from writing she loves to engage herself in music, arts and painting.

CONTACT

piya@sharingstories.in
sharingstorieslive@gmail.com



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Everyone has a story to tell and it needs to be shared. We at Sharing Stories aim to bring out the untold stories for you.

One of my favourite quotes is by N.R. Hart - 'As a writer, you try to listen to what others aren't saying...and write about it.'

As writers, aren't we a blessed with a unique craft? A craft which enables us to weave stories, capture the reader in an imaginary world and bring out the deepest emotions, at times darkest too. Like any other skill, writing too needs patience, dedication and space to grow and shine. Looking at the present scenario, how often I do see some wonderful pieces of writing getting lost in the vast ocean of the literary world.

With the launch of Sharing Stories, an online magazine of its own kind, our focus is on creating an exclusive space for the upcoming authors, writers, bloggers and poets. In these tough times of Lockdown, art and literature have once again proved its importance in our life. Writing is an art which takes shapes in solitude, however, it flourishes only when it reaches its destination. This is an attempt to provide a platform to the unique and creative ideas, germinated on the soil of a writer's fertile imagination and thought process.

Art and literature have always been a mirror of society.

The written words with their edge of sharpness, have the capabilities to bring a revolutionary change in people's outlook.

Sharing stories gives the 'changemaker' in you an opportunity of being heard, to express and showcase your work.

This is our very first edition, and I am sure in this journey along with all the amazing readers and writers, we shall create magical moments and wonderful memories. Every edition shall bring forth new talent, gorgeous stories, contests and a lot more food for thought.

Along with promotions of newly released book and debut authors, we want to bring out a positive change in the world around us. As a community, we aim for 'World Harmony Through Writing'.

Under this campaign, we aim to encourage the writers to get in touch with their deepest thoughts and bring them out in words by writing 15 minutes every day. 'World Harmony Through Writing' is a simple act of decluttering of mind, pouring out your emotions in the writings without any inhibitions and spreading out positive vibes, every day, in those fifteen minutes.

When a sensitive writer follows this daily ritual of writing for fifteen minutes, it is bound to bring out new perception about the kind of challenges the world faces in present times, eventually making it a better place.

Sharing stories is looking forward to your support and blessings, and together we take our first step into the magical world of creativity.

Happy Readings...and blissful writings!



AUTHOR INTERVIEWS

Damyanti Biswas
Nipun Varma
Sourish Roy

#LETSMAKESTORIES WINNERS

jayashree pillai
Pooja Gupta
Srivalli Rekha



BOOK REVEAL & REVIEWS

En route Kasol by Abilash Geetha Balan
Mayaakatha by Meera V. Barath
Book Summary- Begums of Peshawar

LOVE FOR LITERATURE

Know your Idioms
Wordsmith's Corner
Love for Poetry



WRITING CHALLENGE

Picture Prompt Poetry
Word Impact Series
#1000wordstories

SHARING STORIES

Love Bites by Paras



FEATURING

Damayanti Biswas

SOMETIMES, WE DO NOT GET A CHANCE TO THANK EACH ONE WHO HAS HELPED US IN OUR JOURNEY.” LET THE READERS GET A CHANCE TO KNOW ABOUT ALL THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE WHO HAVE PLAYED A PART IN THIS AUTHOR JOURNEY OF YOURS.

In my journey of writing, the formative role has been that of my husband, who first encouraged me to write, and carted me around from one creative writing workshop to another. He continues to make time and space for me to write and listens to me rant about my lack of talent/ inspiration/ what-have-you. So many writing teachers and peers have helped me along and it would take a page to name all of them, but my first was Sharon Bakar, and it was in her classes in Malaysia that I gave myself permission to write. The Forge writing group has also been wonderful in the peer reviews and advice I have received over the years.



YOU HAVE CHOSEN SUCH A SENSITIVE TOPIC FOR YOUR BOOK ‘YOU BENEATH YOUR SKIN’. WAS THERE ANY INCIDENT WHICH COMPELLED YOUR THOUGHTS TO COME UP WITH THIS BOOK? CAN YOU SHARE A FEW LINES FROM YOUR BOOK AND MAYBE GIVE A BIT OF BACKGROUND?

I did not choose the topic, it chose me. The novel started from Anjali Morgan’s character, a single mother coping with her profession, mothering an autistic son, and a long-term illicit affair she feels guilty about but is powerless to break away from.

EXCERPT:

Hospitals were supposed to be quiet, but each time Anjali stepped into any of the lobbies of the Safdarjung Hospital, it seemed like a marketplace or a railway station with its deluge of signboards, noise, people. India’s poor flocked here for treatment by qualified doctors, offered free of charge, but like all government hospitals in the country, its infrastructure didn’t compare with that of those in the private sector. Families accompanying patients spread blankets on the floor, and if they couldn’t find a spot in the hospital corridors, they set up tiny camps in the open and burned small fires to keep warm. This evening, at the main exit, Anjali came across security guards warming their hands over one such fire, exchanging paan, beedi, jokes, their raucous laughter mingling with honks from cars and buses on the busy road just outside the hospital walls. From the lobby behind her came a tang of air freshener, disinfectant, and the low hum of desperation and grief. Eighteen days to Christmas. The air flicked at her collar with chill fingers. Though Delhi would never see snow, it matched a number of other cities in terms of the cold, and the smog that now crawled in from all directions shrouded the hospital in its breath. Anjali felt a twinge of misgiving about reaching her car parked at the back of the hospital. Since her trip to the morgue two weeks ago, her workplace didn’t feel as secure. wrote Anjali in the background of her work as a psychologist, and in the background of New Delhi. Passages like the one above came to me in various writing exercises, and I stitched them together.

YOU BENEATH YOUR SKIN

DAMYANTI
BISWAS



RAPID FIRE

Your First Love... Books.

Favourite Quote.. "Live Frugally on Surprise"—Alice Walker

Favourite Place, Person, Food, beverage...

Home, Husband, Lentils, Water

Favourite Character from a book...

Sydney Carton from a Tale of Two Cities, because of how much I cried over his death as a twelve-year old

Could you share a few tips for Young Authors?

- When you start writing, figure out why—whether it is for yourself, because you want to earn a name and money, or want to achieve the appreciation of peers. Once your goals are clear, you will be saved disappointments, and can plan your priorities better. Most writers aim for all three, and are disappointed because they can't have them all—most successful authors achieve two of these. Not many achieve all three.
- Reading leads to writing. If you're a reader you learn a lot through osmosis. If you don't read, it will show in your work.
- It is good at the initial stages to try and write like the writers you admire, but only as an exercise in craft. Try to be as honest as possible to yourself.
- Always write the first draft for yourself and no one else. Find good sources of feedback, but only send something for feedback after you've let it rest for a while, and written a second draft. Rarely does a first draft convey everything you're trying to say, and letting it alone for a while will give you the objectivity to improve it.
- Take advice from authors, but do not expect all of it to work for you. Choose what works for you and apply that to your craft and your writing life. That's the journey—each writer figures out what his or her priorities and processes are. Same goes for all the points above—all of this is one writer's opinion. Mine. Use only what speaks to you.



ARE YOU WORKING ON ANYTHING AT THE PRESENT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOUR READERS ABOUT?

I'm working on a literary thriller set in Mumbai about a police inspector and a bar dancer who finds that several of her colleagues have gone missing after they were all sent on mysterious assignments.

Q5. ACCORDING TO YOU WHICH ARE THE 5 BOOKS, EVERYONE SHOULD READ AND ALSO WHO ARE YOUR TOP 3 AUTHORS AND WHAT IMPACT THEY HAD IN YOUR JOURNEY AS A WRITER?

I don't know if I can recommend 'should-reads.' The beauty of books is that there's a book for every kind of reader, and a reader for every kind of book. My top books and authors keep changing as I grow as a person and a writer, and my perspective changes. I've loved Hemingway's Old man and the Sea, and it is a love that has stood the test of time. I like books by Kate Atkinson, the work of Amy Hempel, Margaret Atwood, and so many many more. I love Manto and Tagore, and Rohinton Mistry. It is very hard to limit myself to three authors or five books. My reading is very varied, and in some ways, indiscriminate—I read literary fiction, fantasy, crime, some romance, non-fiction. I'm still come into myself as a writer, and cannot trace influences other than to say that because I read both literary and genre, my writing tends to be a blend of both, which leads me to difficult places while trying to get a story down on paper.

What if round....

What if you had to live with only three things all your life, what would the three things be?

A tab with a stylus for all my reading and writing.

What if you were given the power to change one thing from this world, what would you change?

I'd change the hearts of all leaders in this world—corporate, religious, political—fill them with compassion.

What if you had all the money in this world, what would you do first?

Spend my life finding ways to give it all away.

Tell us a bit about your family, likes and dislikes as a person.

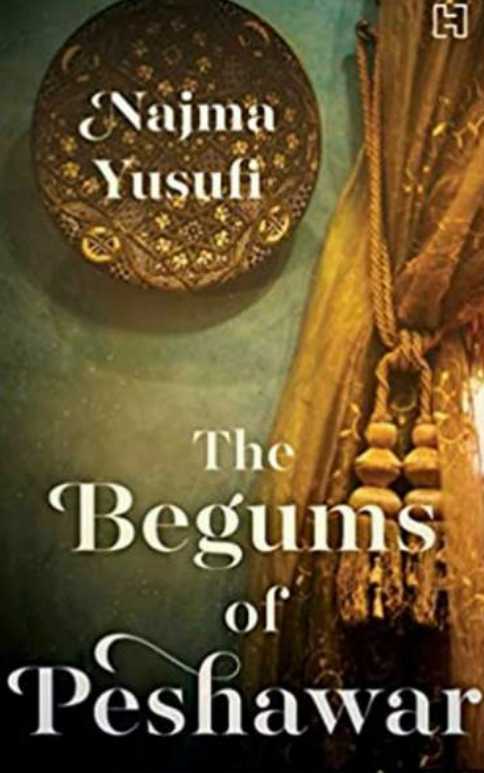
My husband, his family, my parents—all of them hard-working, honest folk who have built their own lives from scratch. This is perhaps why I respect hard work, compassion, loyalty, and integrity. My dislikes have to be the opposites of these. I love sunny days, lonely beaches, and greenery, and have been accused of getting along better with plants and animals than humans.

Who is the favourite character from your book and why?

I don't know if I have a favourite, but I could mention Jatin, because his was the most challenging character to write. He's a grey character. There are things about him to dislike, and things to like--- because though he's deeply patriarchal, there are shades of emotion, sensitivity and softness in him.

AUTHOR BIO

Damyanti Biswas is the author of the Amazon bestseller - *You Beneath Your Skin*(Simon & Schuster India, 2019), her debut literary crime novel which focuses on class and corruption in India. Her short fiction has been published at Litro magazine, Bluestemmagazine, Griffith Review (Australia), Lunch Ticket, Atticus Review, and other journals in the USA and UK. Her work is available in various anthologies in Asia, and she serves as one of the editors of *The Forge Literary Magazine*. Proceeds from the sale of her novel will go to Project WHY and Stop Acid Attacks.



BOOK SUMMARY

BEGUMS OF PESHAWAR

Begums of Peshawar, the debut novel by Najma Yusufi, a filmmaker and lecturer, is her tribute to her ancestors -- the Afghan Durrani settled in Peshawar. Coming from the royal family of the Durrani on her mother's side, the author tells the story of the last ruling Afghani royal family residing in the corners of Munda Beri in the Pakistani city. They still cling on to their royal lineage and lifestyle; they carry the air of being royals around them, even though the past glory is lost. Najma Yusufi, whose father Mehmood Ali Khan Yusufi hails from Uttar Pradesh, has dedicated the novel to her mother Afsar 'Bibigul' Durrani.

The pages of the book narrate the story of the four Durrani daughters who represent the ruling, rich and powerful class and their servant Bano, whose life shows the plights of poor and oppressed. The novel begins in Munda-Beri and the story takes you to Lahore and London. The author describes the culture, rituals, food habits, lifestyle, and the life of servants, the men's baithak and dancing girls through the eyes of the servant girl, Bano. The four Durrani sisters have a certain level of education and can read English. They follow modern trends and keep up with upcoming fashion. However, their life is transformed after their respective marriages.

The docile Bibigul, who is trapped in an abusive marriage with two daughters, never gathers the courage to challenge the cruelty of her highly educated husband. Maagul, the cleverest and the prettiest of the Durrani sister is a slave to a luxurious lifestyle of pomp and show. How this strains her relationship with her husband and in-laws is beautifully written. At times the reader might hate the character of Maagul and at times can feel pity for her. The various shades of human nature are brilliantly brought forward by the author in this book. Chan, the quiet and sensitive amongst the Durrani sister is married to a doctor and the tragic tale of her marital life leaves you pondering about the kind of male dominance these woman face. Chan's husband leaves her for good and leaves for London, only to end up marrying another woman and yet Chan feels that she has still got his name and has a tag of being a respected, married woman. "In these parts, waiting was art that has been honed to perfection. It was something you were born to, if you were a woman, and embedded in you from girlhood. Waiting for father's permission to do basic things. You waited for food. You waited for your mother's love after she had finished tending to her male offspring. You waited for freedom. You waited for your husband's love." This is how Najma Yusufi beautifully sums up their plight. Firasat, the youngest of them with a dark complexion too face the wrath of the destiny when she finds herself trapped in a marriage with a person having a radical mindset. She suffers through her whole life, caged in the name of religious beliefs. However, the story gives a ray of hope at the end, as Firasat's son marries a doctor and stands up for her. It hints to a kind of positive change in the next generation. Amidst all this, the character of Bano comes across as a strong woman who defies her destiny as a servant and carves a niche for herself in the business world. The book touches the most sensitive issues of the society across a span of five decades, yet nowhere it is preachy. It gives the reader questions to ponder upon. The characters are well-crafted and the book never loses its grip on the minds of the reader. The language has the local flavour of Peshawar and hence it recreates the era in the readers' mind. A well researched and thought-provoking book, highly recommended by Sharing Stories.



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—
milk
masala
—
organic
100g

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DUBUK

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HANDCRAFTED
INDIAN MASALAS



Love for Poetry



DEWS & PETALS

No More Noise, I promise

Yes, I am looking for a tiny space.
A little place for me,
As tiny as the curve of a smile,
Like the tiniest beat of the heart.

I don't ask to bring the world,
Half-bitten chocolate will do.
Our unfinished scribble on the paper
towel,
I wish it remains as endless.

Let our silences be my best friend,
As always, we don't need words.
Bear me in the tiny corner of the heart;
No more noise, I promise.

Piya Gajbe

From the poetry collection 'Dews N
Petals'.



SAY IT WITH AN IDIOM

ELVIS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

'The show has come to an end. It's all over.'

When you say 'Elvis Has Left the Building' you mean that the show is over and it's time to go home.

Example of use: "Get your coat; Elvis has left the building!"

Interesting fact:

The phrase 'Elvis has left the building' originated in 1956, when Horace Logan, announcer at the Louisiana Hayride Show, used the expression to encourage a crowd of teens to stay seated for the next performance. Later, it was used to encourage Elvis concertgoers to leave the venue.

WORDSMITH'S CORNER

SUBTERFUGE (N)
SΛBTƏFJU:Dʒ/

Meaning- deceit used in order to achieve one's goal
Usage-

The cunning magician used subterfuge and lies to win over the princess.

FEATURING

Nipun Varma

SOMETIMES, WE DO NOT GET A CHANCE TO THANK EACH ONE WHO HAS HELPED US IN OUR JOURNEY.” LET THE READERS GET A CHANCE TO KNOW ABOUT ALL THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE WHO HAVE PLAYED A PART IN THIS AUTHOR JOURNEY OF YOURS.

I guess it all started with Sreekumar Pillai- my mentor and partner in crime for anything creative. Then my better half Sumi who had to put up with my mood swings- she lovingly calls me psycho, how's that for a humor writer? My friends and colleagues of UST Global- the initial readers of all my writing misadventures so far. If it hadn't been for them, I wouldn't have published this book. Special mention for my parents who help us in taking care of the kids. They try their best to compensate for their good-for-nothing-much son.

CAN YOU SHARE A FEW LINES FROM YOUR BOOK AND MAYBE GIVE A BIT OF BACKGROUND?

“Welcome

to the world of Indian techies. Here you will find two different techie species. The '916 techies' who are the real deal, the hardcore techie brats who eat, sleep and breathe technology. On the other side, there is the '1 gram techie' - the ones who are in the world of IT just to earn a living. For them, this is just another job and technology is something that helps them earn their bread and butter. There is a special case of being 'talk-nologists' instead of 'technologists'.”

India is probably the only country wherein the number of engineers exceeds the total number of vehicles on its roads. A huge chunk of these engineers end up in the IT sector. As per my knowledge, there has never been an insider's account on the daily life of these IT professionals- lovingly called as techies. My book is an attempt to depict a techie's life in an authentic manner. This IT satire comedy also tries to address the fears, challenges and insecurities associated with the IT profession. For techies, these stories are as relatable as their daily chores and for non-techies, This book gives a sneak peek into the world of IT engineers.



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THROUGH WRITING**

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RAPID FIRE

Your First Love....

It's official- she bears the title of my wife

Favourite Place, Person, Food, beverage....

My room, my mom, my homemade food, my tea

Favorite Character from a book...

Jackal- From The Day of the Jackal

Favorite Quote.....

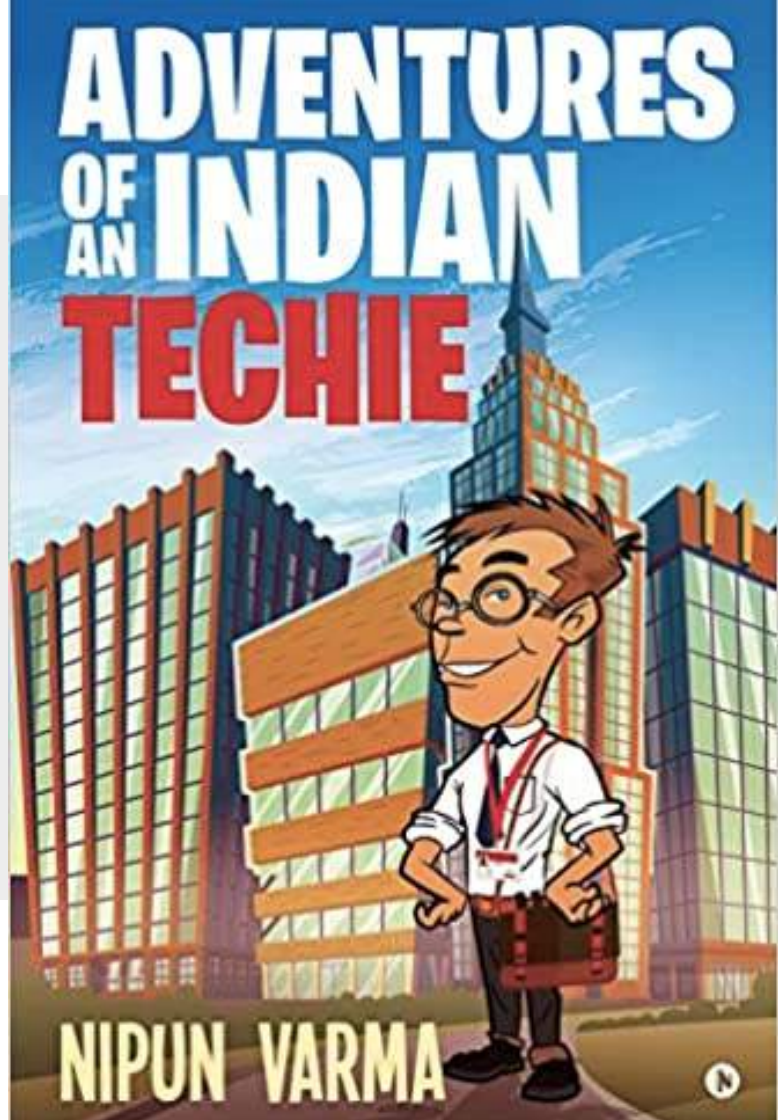
"This too shall pass.."

COULD YOU SHARE FEW TIPS FOR YOUNG AUTHORS?

According to me, there is no good time or place to write. Any time is good time and write whatever that pleases you. When you write, don't edit, or even think twice, just let it flow and have it saved. Once done, take a break and come back to what you have written after one or two days. Read it as a reader and then based on your feelings, make the necessary edits. Do this exercise again and again till there are no more changes to be made. Then show/read it to your group of close friends and get their suggestions and feedback.

My top 5 must read book list| ?

- The Last Lecture- Randy Pausch
- The Great Indian Novel- Shashi Tharoor
- Immortality- Milan Kundera
- The Day of the Jackal- Frederick Forsyth
- The Trial- Franz Kafka



Based on the responses, enhance the writing and get it to the next stage. It's almost like completing a software project. You develop the code, give it for testing, fix the bugs, then give it for business user testing, fix the bugs and finally send it for production. The mantra is simple- Believe in yourself and just keep going.

Are you working on anything at the present you would like to share with your readers about?

Yes, couple of projects are in the pipeline. I am having discussions on converting this into a web series. On the writing front, I am planning for a prequel and sequel for the techie adventures. The prequel will be focused on the escapades in the engineering college whereas the sequel will focus on the techie's onsite assignments. Fingers crossed at the moment.

EARTHEN RADIANCE

BEAUTY PRODUCTS



THE HANDCRAFTED ELEGANCE
HEAL, CURE & REJUVENATE
YOUR SKIN AND HAIR.



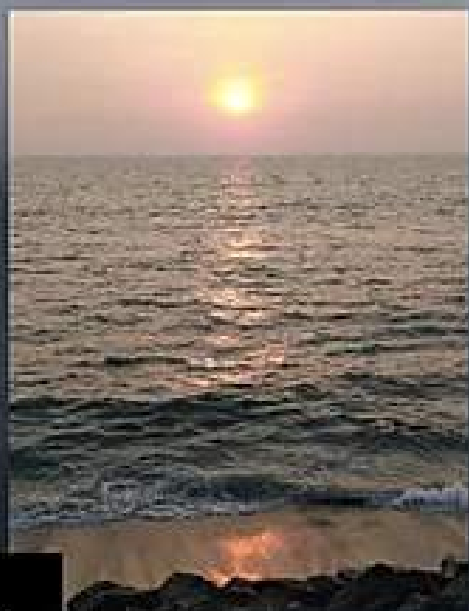
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#letsmakestoriesdino

initiative by Meera Barath

Image Prompt



Jayashree Pillai

Placid, calm, beautiful. I watch you embrace the setting sun. Together you will disappear into the darkness, leaving behind echoes of your gentle murmur. You were turbulent, last winter. Raging in anger, tearing across the shores in a loud wail. I watched in horror, afraid to cross your path, looking for ways to pacify you. Till the sun emerged. You slowly receded into your space of peace, whimpering while the sun caressed you. Ashamed, you returned, to make your peace with the battered shores. They forgave you. Today, I spend a quiet moment with you, breathing in your peace.



Dr. Pooja Gupta

Jia looked at those waves gushing nearby. Wish she could rewind the clock and change that eventful moment. The evening when she let little Rhea's finger go. After hanging up the phone, she had realised that little Rhea was nowhere. Half an hour later her body was recovered by some fishermen! She wiped her tears. "What's the purpose of my life? I too shall surrender myself to waves," wondered the guilt-stricken mother. "Rhea. Don't blame yourself. Rather, save any more Rhea's from dying," said her friend. Today, Rhea's lifeguard club was inaugurated; Jia had found a reason to live!



Srivalli Pavan Rekha

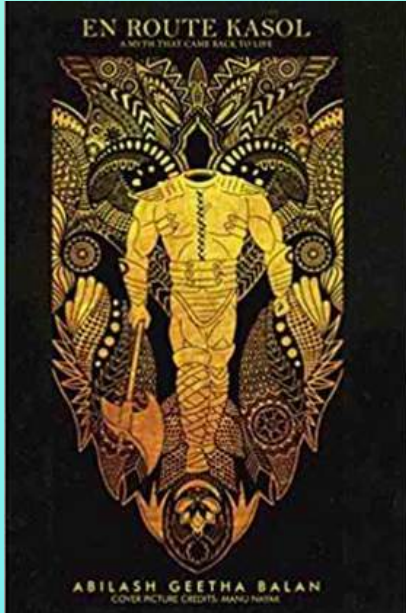
She leaned against the old railing, watching the fireball sink into my waves. She'd stay until the twilight stars scattered above us. For months, we stared at each other from either side of the barrier. Her shoulders slumped in defeat, unable to bear the weight of memories that refused to go away. I tried to rise higher and wipe away the trails of saltwater on her pale cheeks. The crescent moon refused to acknowledge my plea. Suddenly, she dropped something into my abyss and walked away. It was the last time I saw her. A battered locket remained with me.



Abilash

EN ROUTE KASOL

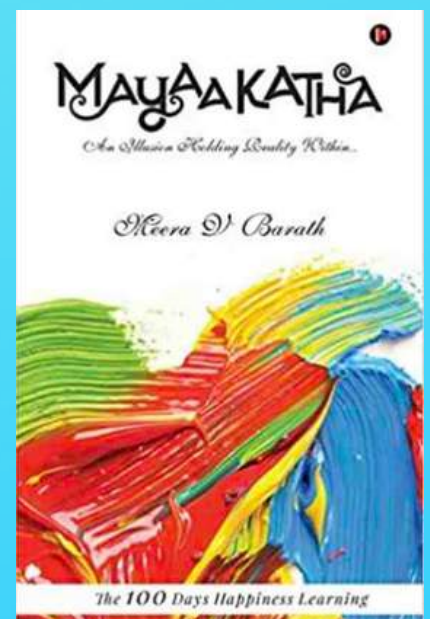
En route Kasol is a thriller book by Young Indian Author ABILASH Geetha Balan- under the Novella category. En Route Kasol is a short book that you can finish reading in a couple of hours or a day. This is the second book by the Author after being amongst the highly rated books in Amazon and with positive review the Author has written this book after a two year break. This book is perfect for teenagers and all general public. Our earth is a mysterious place, filled with many urban legends and folklores. 'En route Kasol' is a tale of 3 people within the small forest town of Kasol, in northern India. Kasol forest holds many secrets, amongst them, the 106 acres single tree forest, considered as the oldest living thing by the scientific community has remained a mystery for many centuries now. A mentalist, an activist and a medical researcher come together and try to unravel this age old mystery. Amidst this thrilling adventure, they try to resolve a major challenge that has been plaguing mankind since industrial revolution. A story that is destined to stretch the boundaries of human imagination.



MAYAAKATHA

"Meera, stop telling stories," I was told. To me, it was a Calmness, which had the Turbulence of a Rough Sea, and a Tsunami of Currents hitting my Mind with Questions. Sometimes, I screamed in the silence, like a Bud in the Blossoming stage, Sometimes, I accepted the Sometimes, Sometimes, I ran from the Situation, And Sometimes, the SAME Situation brought me back to The Reality! The Reality, where I illustrated my 'Illusions to Happiness' and said: "Why not create Stories if that's My Strength?" And I realized: Yes, Happiness is in Creating Stories. And I went blogging my Learning as A Happiness for 100 straight days, sharing my Experience and reflecting what I resonated, CREATING MY LEGACY Called HAPPINESS!

Meera



BookReveal

MEERA V. BARATH

FEATURING

Sourish Roy

WHAT OR WHO INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

The objective behind the composition of the stories of **TALES FROM BENGAL** has been taking these very unostentatious fringes of northern Bengal out to the readers worldwide. Till date, not much has been written about this region in English literature, barring the Bangla masterpieces by eminent writers like Debesh Roy and Samaresh Majumdar. Perhaps I am not overstating, even if I say, considering literature as a whole, this part of the world has remained unexplored, if not ignored, to date. I just tried to initiate the process through my book. And now, given the immense response to the book, I can say that perhaps my book has started working towards that goal.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, LIKES AND DISLIKES AS A PERSON.

I have dedicated my book to my late Baba. For, had he not let me feel free with my own world of imagination, perhaps I won't have been to penetrate so deep into the life and the struggle associated with it as I have tried to in the book while trying to sketch the gruelling drudgery of the characters. Now, I have my Maa, Bunu, Bhaai, and Moni, my wife who has to play the role of a reader of the unedited version of my stories, and of course, my ever-questioning son, Ribhu. When I am not writing, I spend time with my guitar. Rather, music plays the most important part of my life. I love Hindi Golden Oldies, especially the inimitable numbers composed by the Pancham-Gulzar duo.



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RAPID FIRE

Your First Love...

The 'M's in my life: Music, Maa, Moni and

Favourite Place, Person, Food, beverage...

The hills of Dooars, R. D. Burman, Eggroll, Pure Lebu Sorbot (Lime Sorbet).

Other Talents

Can play on the guitar a bit besides being a vocalist.

Favorite Sports & Sportsperso

Cricket and Sachin Tendulkar.

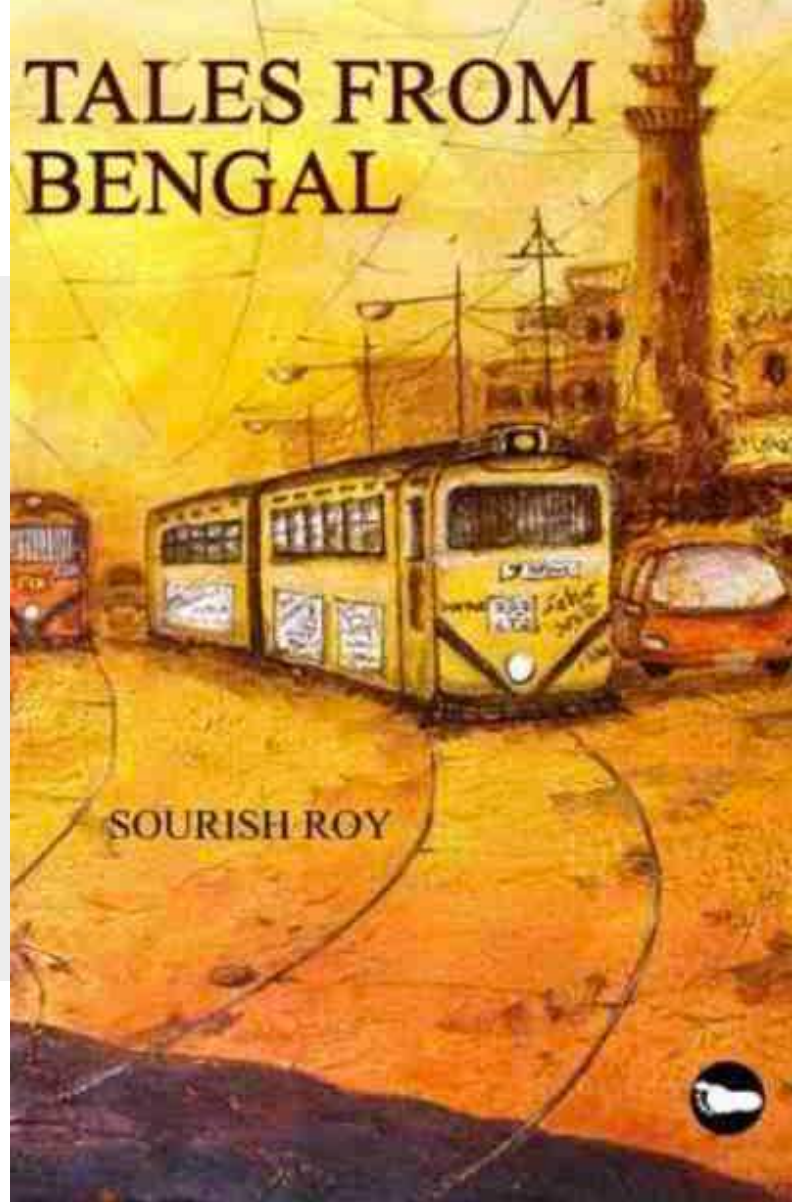
WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON SHARING STORIES CAMPAIGN, "WRITING FOR HARMONY-WRITING 15 MINUTES A DAY TO BRING CLARITY IN LIFE"?

Such campaigns are of irrefutable importance. These kinds of initiatives are sure to generate the urges for providing expressions to our inherent feelings, for giving shape to our thoughts which otherwise may remain untold forever.

What if you had all the money in this world, what would you do first?

A philanthropist system of schools and colleges to provide free education to all those who have to forsake learning for the sake of livelihood.

TALES FROM BENGAL



Can you talk about any interesting character from your book?

To me, the most interesting of all would be that of Subal, the male protagonist of the story 'Anomaly'. The character in himself is an enigma. His nature is an intrigue to the readers. The readers will have to decipher whether he is the hero, or the anti-hero, or even whether he is Subal at all or somebody else. Also, they have to choose either him or his wife Seema for the central character of the story. Actually, the whole story has been presented as a riddle.



LOVE BITES

BY PARAS,

"I am so shocked that your love bites are intruded in your skin and it is everywhere from neck till nape. It's been one complete month, I really don't think so that these are love bites. Are these?" Naba inquired while I was checking the answer sheets of final exams. I winked and replied, "My husband is wild and he is awesome in bed". I later covered it completely so the topic won't drag much. "Oh Jesus, tell him to slow down, your love scars are openly yelling out to every student. Please make sure, he won't do it next time, not on the visible portions of your skin". She commanded. I know Naba was my friend and a good soul but the way she said was not as a friend but an order to a junior from her H.O.D. After a pause of two minutes, I replied, "Ok; this won't happen anymore. I will take special care of it." I reached home after the day was done, but my heart was still worried and I was sad because I seriously didn't want them to be visible. While he was away from home for a couple of days I felt relaxed. I knew the moment he would arrive; I would have to obey him for intercourse; for his sexual filthy desires, for his worst postures, for being his wife, for being his partner in bed, for everything which I hated, for everything which I wanted to oppose.

I was alive but was a corpse inside. Dead, because I was served in the front of a hungry wolf who wanted to feed himself, biting me, thrashing me and showing his weird side every time. I hated to be born in the family of underprivileged, I hated to survive, I hated to breathe and I was alive just because my mother told me that "Suicide is for cowards".

My nights were less sleepy and I used to get up early. However, I turned up late at the school today as the clock struck seven. I was fine yet uneasy. It was my month's day. I was badly wobbling on my bed. I called Naba after fifteen minutes after trying my level best to control the pain. However, it ended up as a failed attempt. "Hey Naba, I am sorry I can't make" "Oh God, don't tell me you guys are doing again? She spoke without listening. Her words pinched my soul and I puked, "I am on menses; isn't hungry for sex all the time". There was silence on both sides. "I hate sex, do you hear that, "I HATE SEX". I was fuming and her words slit my wounds again. "Oh, am sorry, I think my words hurt,



I take them back" she confessed. I disconnected the line silently. Struggling with my mood swings I somehow managed to divert my mind. As it was my first day so my skin was swollen and I suffered from a bad stomach ache.

I could feel constant pain. It was similar to a prick which continued throughout. I didn't even get up to brush my teeth. Later in the afternoon, I was famished. I pulled myself to enter into the kitchen territory. The first and last easy meal was milk and corn flakes. It took me no time to finish it and felt yummy too. I went directly to my room and searched for pain killers; knowing well that the doctor had strictly cautioned me not to take them. It was a silent evening and in this pin-drop silence, I slept again. I was not aware of the devil next door. I woke up in the evening startled by the loud bang at the door. I knew who he was. I was shocked to see him as I wasn't expecting him to return so soon, that too when I was on my periods. I knew him more than he knew himself. "Hey darling, how are you?" He asked. "Am not fine, beginning days," I replied hesitatingly. "Oh, no! That means we won't be doing??" He frowned, his facial expressions changed quickly. Let me get you a glass of water first. I replied and tried to escape from his vision. I know he being quite stubborn and adamant on the things he wanted. I stood in the kitchen as tears rolled down my cheeks, unaware of his presence behind me. "Hey, you fine?" He questioned and picked up the glass full of water. "Nothing..." I replied and hugged him. "I am not well, I can't fulfill your desire today and you just have to wait for the next couple of days, please." I requested. He was burning in anger, frustration and envy. He threw the glass on my face and went directly to his room, shouting. His reaction jolted my soul.

"Does sex matters that high that you can't understand your partner's condition?" "Is sex that high on the mind which leads you to disrespect your wife?"... "Are love bites only the name of love, though they are bad omens?" "Do love bites really mean love?" So many questions in my mind and I found no answer to them. I picked the glass again, poured water and went to the room. It was again a vain try to convince him. "Dear, please don't be upset, water for you". He threw the glass again and held me with my arm, pulled me towards himself and clutched me hard. He held me so hard that I couldn't rescue myself. I screamed louder than loudest, asking him to stop. He was ruthless and unstoppable. He kept on slapping me as I opposed. I was so tired and he knew it well. I quit. He was so much annoyed that he infused all his frustration into my skin. He starting tearing my skin with his teeth. "No please, no love bites, I have to teach students, I can't hide them." "No please, no no no no... My requests fell on deaf ears. He continually was doing what he felt like. There was blood all over and I was lying in the pool. I had blue marks all over my body again. My neck was filled with those scars and the pain was floated in my veins. I cried over my karma, cried for the woman I am, cried for everything, about the helplessness... It was really tough for me to stand up. Somehow I got up from the bed and began to walk into the next room. Unable to walk properly I lay on my bed again, helpless. "Dear Naba, I don't know why I am telling you all these things. Please keep it a secret. I don't want people to make fun of my love bites. It pinches me hard when someone says that your hubby loves you." I am going to sue him and file a divorce. Amen!





FLYING GIRL

ABILASH GEETHA BALAN

I was travelling from Chennai to Hyderabad in a bus during the day. A young girl sat next to me. She was in her early 20s, she seemed to be disturbed quite a lot. It seemed like she was arguing with herself in her thoughts. Maybe her first break up, I thought. I did not want to trouble her.

I started to gaze outside the window. The bus was passing by the paddy fields and it was sunny outside. I tried to close the window. Suddenly, I felt a touch on my shoulder, I slowly turned. Looking at me, she gently smiled and asked,

"Can I ask you something?"

I was happy to chat with her, looking at her in pain for this long. "Yes please."

"She hesitantly said, "If you had a chance to possess a super power what would it be ? "

I was surprised to hear this question. This seemed totally out of context. I thought for a moment before I responded, "Well, I would like the power of controlling people's mind from anywhere across the world... before i could finish my sentence, She interrupted,

"I would like to have the power to fly," she continued, "I should be able to fly anywhere I want. Far away from problems. If you are facing a problem anywhere, just get up and fly, somewhere else." she seemed to be lost in her thoughts again. Her wish sounded reasonable for me. I followed it up with another question, till date I do not know why I asked this question to her. That one question changed my life for ever and has been haunting me till date.

"What happens if you have too many problems? I asked it with a smile on my face. "

She gently responded with a smile. "You can always decide to end it."

She seems to have already lost interest in the conversation. I followed it up with another question. "Where are you going to?" She said, "JATINGA ASSAM." and turned her face around and closed her eyes.

I realised the conversation was over. She was far away from her destination Assam, I thought.

After a couple of days, while I was at work I decided to google Jatinga. I had the shock of my life. I was startled and my whole body started shivering... —"Jatinga, a village on a ridge, is located in Dima Hasao district, Assam State in India. It is 330 kilometres south of Guwahati. It is most famous for the phenomenon of birds "committing suicide".

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